



# Doug Duncan Reports

News About Montgomery County, Maryland

May 2004

## **Purchasing Wind Energy**

Montgomery County prides itself on being a leader in environmental protection and we recently solidified that position when we signed a contract with Washington Gas Energy Services and their wind energy supplier, Community Energy, Inc., to purchase five percent of our energy from wind power.

The County represented a buying group of six County agencies, 11 municipalities and Prince George's County. I'm especially proud of the fact that this is the largest purchase of wind energy by a local government in the country, the largest retail purchase in Maryland and the fifth largest retail purchase in the nation.

The purchase of wind energy is a major step toward meeting the region's air quality goals for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to global change in climate. The environmental benefits from this purchase are equivalent to a yearly reduction of 42 million pounds of carbon dioxide, 95,000 pounds of nitrous oxides and 1.4 pounds of mercury. The reduction of carbon dioxide that will result from the purchase of wind power is equivalent to 36 million miles not driven or planting nearly 3 million trees.

## **FY '05 Budget Passed**

The Fiscal Year '05 Budget adopted by the County Council closely mirrors the one I submitted in March, substantially increasing funding for education, transportation, and public health and safety. I appreciate the hard work and effort the Council put into reviewing and approving this budget that will direct our spending in the year ahead.

One key difference from the budget I submitted and the one Council approved, however, is the energy tax increase they included. I'm particularly concerned about this because the same tax was raised last year, as well. Combined with the fact that price caps on electricity rates are being lifted in July, the impact on the average tax payer could be substantial.

Although our County economy is very strong – with new jobs being created, a low unemployment rate and a strong

return on tax receipts – the financial picture at the State level is much more tenuous. This is why we must be cautious and not over-commit our finances or limit our flexibility to deal with any future shortfalls in our budget.

## **New Garage, 20-Screen Theatre Open in Downtown Silver Spring**

There's a lot going on in Downtown Silver Spring these days, with new openings and more construction changing the face of the community. That's why the opening of the new 1,700-space Wayne Avenue Garage received such an enthusiastic welcome from residents and business people, alike. Even more spaces will become available when the 1,300-space Town Center Garage opens early this summer.

The new Pay On Foot payment system is designed to have people pay before retrieving their cars, to help prevent backups when leaving the garage.

The seven-level garage also features a covered promenade that leads to Ellsworth Drive (at Silver Plaza) with its restaurants, stores and the brand new Majestic 20 Theatres opened by Consolidated Theatres at the corner of Ellsworth Drive and Fenton Street.

They celebrated their Grand Opening with a splash – a red-carpet, advance screening of "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban." This put Silver Spring on the map with London, New York and Los Angeles that also featured advance showings. One of The Majestic's customer-friendly programs is Summer Movie Magic, a child-oriented film festival that will run on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays all summer for only a dollar per child.

If you haven't been to Downtown Silver Spring in a while, now's the time to plan an evening or part of a weekend – take in a movie, have lunch or dinner and park nearby.

The new Silver Spring has sprung and is definitely open for business -- and leisure time activities. More details are available at [www.silversprung.com](http://www.silversprung.com).



### **Legislation Signed to Change Fire and Rescue System**

Another event held in Silver Spring recently marked a major change in the structure of our Fire and Rescue System and celebrated the beginning of construction of the new Silver Spring Fire Station.

I was pleased to sign into law legislation that clarifies the command and control structure of our fire service and streamlines this critical service for our 21st century needs. Thanks to the tremendous work by County Councilmember Mike Knapp and all other individuals and organizations that provided their input.

Under the bill, which takes effect January 1, 2005, a uniformed County Fire Chief will administer, direct and originate Fire and rescue operations. The seven-member Fire and Rescue Commission will be retained as a review board to assist the new chief. The chief of the Division of Volunteer Services will have a clear role in the administration, recruitment, retention and promotion of volunteer personnel and facilities.

The new Silver Spring station will be a critical public safety enhancement and a vital addition to downtown Silver Spring. In addition to the fire station, the facility will also house the 3rd District Police Substation, office space for the Silver Spring Urban District and the Fire Safety Zone that will house displays, interactive technologies, and educational information for all ages on the power of fire and other life safety issues.

### **ICC Included in Regional Analysis**

Planning for the InterCounty Connector (ICC) took another step forward in April when the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments Transportation Planning Board (TPB) voted to include the ICC in the regional Conformance Analysis model that will assess the impact of the project on local air quality.

This was an important vote because this is the next step in determining whether the ICC will qualify for federal funding. I lobbied hard on this matter and commend the TPB for their foresight in moving this project forward and letting it through to the next step.

Construction of this road will significantly reduce the impact of traffic congestion on County roads where our commuters experience some of the longest rush hour drive times in the country. That's why the ICC project is critical to helping to improve the quality of life not only in Montgomery County but in the region.